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Charles Wright at the MLA

Constantine Contogenis

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Charles Wright at the MLA

by Constantine Contogenis

A scholar of porn discovered travel
writing had been used to write about sex.
Another speaker showed us sexy slides:
one of a clothed woman exposing her breasts
provoked a squeak from a watching woman—
a good imitation of Betty Boop.

Right off the lobby, Victoria's Secret
advertised how well their bras advertised.
I felt the urge to buy but with feminist theory
behind me, I read between the signs: a male,
I must stand aside, wait until the buyers
are suited and contend for my arm.

But the true yearly passion is for jobs.
The career and would-be career haters
of clichés say, "meat market MLA"
with daring. My one interview over,
I became my own interviewer deciding
whether to let me back into my life.

I watched for the prosody of clothes
in counterpoint with bodies. I looked
into the lobby's available eyes.
The return looks stung slightly like fresh bullet
wounds that would hurt more as adrenaline
drained and I retreated from the line of fire.

At Wright's reading, I felt that at least
for a few days I was saved. I don't know
how he helped by just writing desire against
desire—and not even desire for flesh
but for things—matching his backyard against
the being of no thing. Well, show me the way.

